

Frequently Asked Question About CATALYST

updated 6/15/2001

Q: Will CATALYST replace paper-based reporting? Will there be “something else” to turn in as well?

CATALYST should entirely replace paper reporting. You will still have to turn in an original face sheet with your contracts, because we need an original signature, but otherwise we do not anticipate needing other “official reports” from you. Of course, your contract manager will always appreciate anything you want to send him/her that relates to your contract (pictures or any other information that doesn’t “fit” in the reporting system). Ongoing communication with your contract manager is very important, and can’t be replaced by a reporting system.

Q: When will CATALYST be officially “on line”?

If you are reading this, then CATALYST is officially on line right now.

Q: How will CATALYST “prove” that our programs are working?

CATALYST will collect outputs, and some program-specific outcomes, from your local programs. At DOH, we will use CATALYST data in combination with surveillance data from the adult/youth telephone surveys and the school surveys to identify areas of the state where “it’s working” and where “it’s not working,” and then look at CATALYST data to figure out what programs have been doing in those specific areas. We want to identify and promote activities that “work” and those that don’t. It’s very important to remember that we’re not totally sure “what works,” so we need people to be honest & help us to identify activities that don’t work as well.

Q: Will CATALYST be able to manage school data for analysis on the community, county, ESD, or tribal levels? Some schools may be in a county and a part of an ESD, if we need to report to our stakeholders we need specific data.

CATALYST will collect process data for workplans in ESDs & communities.

CATALYST is available and will work for tribes also, but it is not required for tribes.

It will also capture pre/post-test outcomes for certain targeted activities, regardless of where they happen (communities, schools, tribes). This part of the system is being released in Phase II -- late summer 2001.

Reports can be generated for data collected using regions (such as all community/school/tribe activities within an ESD region), contractors, counties, specific population groups, or by activity type. We designed the system to provide maximum flexibility in reporting, to meet as many specific needs for local people in reporting to stakeholders as we could think of or heard about.

After this initial release of CATALYST, we plan to do system upgrades, so that as people come up with additional ideas or improvements for the system, we can accommodate that. This will be Phase III – beginning in late 2001, and probably an ongoing process.

Q: How much ongoing support will be available for CATALYST? Will CATALYST data be used in conjunction with other state data, VISTA, CHS, etc.

We will need to have ongoing trainings for CATALYST, and updates for user groups. We plan to continue to have training and on-site or remote TA available for all users. During early implementation, we anticipate tons of questions and challenges, and we hope to have plenty of “people support” to address a variety of user needs.

CATALYST is a process indicator and short-term outcome data collection system. It tells us what you plan to do locally, what you get done, and some of the early effects of your activities (for example, pre/post data from a training or intervention program). We will compare data collected in CATALYST to results from telephone and school-based surveys, to identify ‘what happened’ in areas of the state where the biggest attitude & behavior changes are observed. This will help us to more clearly define “best practices” for implementation in a variety of community & school settings.

Other health outcome surveillance systems, like VISTA (a software program that allows people to calculate local rates & percentages for birth/death certificate data, and hospitalization data), will be crucial in looking for longer-term health impacts from our behavior change. We could like to work with users who are interested in monitoring shorter-term health outcomes, such as asthma hospitalization rates for children, or low birthweight births. Because even short-term health impacts are measured by data that take time to be released into the systems (for example, we are just getting the 2000 birth and death data now), this is probably a longer-range activity because we don’t want to examine these data before any reasonable impact could be seen.

Q: When will the rural/urban data be available? Do we know what the OR Strong Community Programs include and what moderate school and programs look like? Can you e-mail us the “answer” to outcome-based Planning Activity as an example in planning? Can you send a sample of the program impacts, goals, objectives, activities, output tree sample where you have drawn connections for us to take back to our boards for planning? Is there any way to analyze data from year one without it entering the year 2 pool?

Again, I must apologize that our release of the county-based telephone survey data is far behind what we had hoped for, due to ongoing staffing shortages in the evaluation program. We should be able to release these data in June 2001. First you will receive it by email for proofing, and then we will post to the DOH website.

We do communicate with Oregon program staff, and have modified some of their assessment tools for use in schools. We are in ongoing communication with them to define what “strong” programs look like – a scale for assessment of community programs is in the works, based on their model, but we need to modify it because there are significant differences in our community activities compared to theirs (they have different state policies & no preemption, so their local activities are very policy-passage driven, which is not possible for us right now).

We will post the “answer” and other supporting materials from the conference on our “secret” website for your use: www.doh.wa.gov/tobacco/contractors_tools.htm (remember you have to type it in exactly, and then bookmark it for future use – there are no buttons to lead you there).

If may be possible to enter Year 1 data into the CATALYST system as part of our pilot test for Phase II (short-term outcomes evaluation). If you have data from evaluations that you would be willing to share or have entered into the system during pilot, please contact our office. We will not try to enter workplan data from Year 1 into CATALYST, because this would be a huge burden on both local and state programs. Year 1 (statewide) was primarily focused on capacity-building, and Years 2+ will be implementation years, so although it would have been good to capture data if it had been possible, the lack of Year 1 data is not a crisis.

Q: When schools & communities are partnering on specific programs, how do we make sure each gets credit for what they did, and make sure that everything gets reported?

This is going to be an ongoing thought process, and will be an important issue as schools and communities partner more and more on activities. Each organization (school and community) should document the activity if it is in their workplan. Each organization should also make some indication that the other organization was a “key partner” in the program delivery. Also, constant communication with your contract manager will help to make sure that he/she is aware of what is going on, and won’t fail to recognize that partnership.